



MEMORANDUM

To: All member schools

From: NSSAF Board of Governors Chair

Date: May 5, 2019

Re: RUGBY

Dear Principals,

On May 2, 2019 at the Board of Governors meeting, a decision was made to remove rugby from the NSSAF sport schedule. This decision was based on: data from the School Insurance Program that supported the observations of principals at their own schools, a discussion of the limitations of the school rugby season because of weather/field conditions and time for proper training, and finally, with no developmental system for rugby in place in Nova Scotia, the concern for safety of new participants. It was a difficult decision, but for student safety, the unanimous decision to remove rugby was made.

On May 3, 2019 Minister Churchill made a directive through social media for the NSSAF to reinstate rugby. The justification for the decision was that the NSSAF breached the funding agreement with the Department because the Department was not informed of the proposed changes. The NSSAF Board of Governors disagrees that the funding agreement was breached.

As part of the agreement, the Chair of the NSSAF meets with the Deputy Minister to discuss any possible issues that may arise. On March 29, 2019 I met with the Deputy Minister and discussed a number of issues including the status of rugby. I shared the SIP data with the Deputy and discussed our consideration of discontinuing rugby. She offered no objections and engaged in a discussion about sports that may replace rugby on the schedule.

Furthermore, as part of the process when examining rugby as an NSSAF sport, all principals of member schools were sent a memo which included SIP data for a variety of school sports and our Federation's desire for further risk assessment for rugby.

At the May 2, 2019 Board meeting a representative of the DEECD was present for the entire discussion and was fully informed about the decision and the memo being sent to schools. At no time did the DEECD representative indicate any conflicts with the agreement.

For all the reasons listed above, the NSSAF Board was extremely disappointed that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development communicated over social media that an agreement breach had occurred.

Let me be very clear - the NSSAF Board is not against the sport of rugby. Our Board is simply not confident that a safe environment exists when rugby is being introduced to young men and women at the high school level. We understand the disappointment among the student athletes, their families and the coaches. We are also cognizant that Rugby Nova Scotia is losing a large feeder system for potential players. Development of players for other sporting organizations, however, is not our mandate.

The Board of Governors of the NSSAF is made up of dedicated volunteers that work to support our schools and our student athletes. They make decisions based on the principles of the Federation and always with a priority on student safety. Although individuals may disagree with decisions made by the Board, the integrity and motivation of their actions is always based in the "Education through Sport" lens.

I would like to thank the members of the Board of Governors for their leadership and I would like to thank principals for all the support that you have provided the Board.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen MacNeil". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephen" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "MacNeil".

Chair, Board of Governors

Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation